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ABSTRACT

Carleton University's writing tutorial service is staffed by trained graduate students and provides free individual instruction for students having problems writing academic English. The students submit writing samples before the first session at which both student and tutor map out a strategy for improvement. Analysis of the tutors' perceptions of student writing problems indicates not grammatical difficulties but prewriting and organizational problems that are closely related to the subject matter and to the increased upper-level academic demands made on the students. The tutorial program focuses on the earliest stage of the writing process, prewriting, and the student's own subject matter and assignments. The primary technique used is that of questioning the student and then encouraging him or her to play with ideas and learn the creative power of language. The tutors, who are trained and have regular staff meetings to review techniques, have been found to benefit as much as the students from the experience. Increases in student participation in the program are seen as a measure of its effectiveness. (MSE)

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The Carleton University Writing Tutorial Service

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For almost ten years now, Carleton University has been mounting a somewhat unusual, and certainly untraditional program in the teaching of writing. The Writing Tutorial Service is what its name implies—a service to students where those who want help with their writing, usually the writing of academic essays, can come for individual tutoring. The tutors are graduate students trained for this task, working for the Service as part of their university scholarship. The Service is offered free of charge to all students, graduate and undergraduate, part-time and full-time, those majoring in English as well as in other disciplines.

The procedure is quite simple: any student who wants help can make a one-hour appointment with the tutor merely by calling the secretary or visiting our office any day of the week. When they make their first appointment, students are asked to leave a sample of their writing for the tutor to consider before they meet. The first meeting is devoted to discussing the student's problems and mapping a joint strategy; the student and tutor continue to meet for these

one-hour sessions until either one or the other no longer finds the tutorials necessary.

This bare-bones description of the operation and organization of the Writing Tutorial Service, of course, tells little of how we actually teach. Before discussing our teaching methods and philosophy, however, I would like to say something about the history of the Service and the context in which it arose—not out of historical interest but because what is central to our approach and to our evolution is that we have responded to real needs within a specific context. The Writing Tutorial Service was not imposed on Carleton as an alien structure from without; rather, it grew from within, responding to internal promptings and assuming a shape that was compatible with the larger organism.

History

The Writing Tutorial Service began in the English Department with two graduate students enlisted to help those upper-year students, honouring or majoring in English, who were not satisfied with their writing. Upper-year English students have, of course, already self-selected; only those who are relatively competent writers choose such a program. Consequently, the students seeking help were those who wrote well enough but wanted to write better. From the beginning then, the Service has not borne the stigma of being "remedial" with its unpleasant medical associations.

Not surprisingly, news about the Service spread and requests were heard from other sectors of the university community. Soon we had opened our doors to all university students and our staff had expanded to include graduate students in disciplines other than English. To reflect our broader base and inter-disciplinary thrust, the Service was moved out of the English Department and into the Centre for Applied Language Studies. Although our home changed however, the original impulse continued to set the tone for our teaching;

that is, rather than providing bandaids and splints for the linguistically deformed, we conceived of our task as that of helping competent students to write better.

Our Students

Early on, in part in response to the university's Office of Planning, Analysis and Statistics, and partly for our own purposes, we performed a careful analysis of the students coming to the Service and the nature of their writing problems (what might be called, in other circles, an informal needs analysis).

As to our students, our statistics revealed that they come from all disciplines, with a preponderence from the humanities and social sciences: specifically about 35% from the humanities and 35% from the social sciences. About half the essays dealt with in the humanities are English essays, and half of those in the social sciences are political science papers. In addition, history, law, journalism, sociology, film studies, philosophy and biology all represent important clients. To a large extent, those disciplines not represented do not elicit much writing in English.

A second significant feature of our student body is their academic level. Only about one-third of the students visiting the Service are first-year students. The remaining two-thirds include students in second, third or fourth year of undergraduate programs or students enrolled at any level in graduate programs. The preponderance are students in their second or third year. Joyce Steward, Director of the Writing Lab at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, has noticed this same phenomenon and has concluded: "The wide range of our requests led us long ago to agree with those who conclude that composition instruction may be wasted on large numbers of freshmen. Students begin to write better—and to seek help with their writing—at the level of upper-division courses, where suddenly they have something important to say, and someone to say it to" (1975:32). The point seems to

be that for writing instruction to be perceived as useful, for the teaching of writing to stick, a degree of intellectual maturity is necessary, and many students don't achieve that maturity until their upper years. One advantage of our writing service is that we can respond to different rates of maturation; students come when they feel the need. Consequently, the teaching is provided at the moment at which the learner is most receptive.

Writing Problems

In order to define the nature of our students' writing problems, we drew up a set of possible categories, in part based on an early schematization by the university's planning office. The categories are listed and specified on the accompanying chart (Table 1), as are the results of our analysis. The data were compiled by the tutors for each student attending the Service over a complete year. Two separate diagnoses were made of the writing of each student: one by the tutor and one by the student. Our statistics have been compiled on the basis of the tutor's assessments only; we were interested and encouraged, however, to see how frequently the two assessments coincided.

The statistics revealed in Table 1 may be surprising to some. Only 12% of students whose first language is English write with frequent major grammatical errors, and only a further 22% were diagnosed as having such difficulties on even an occasional basis. In contrast, almost 65% have difficulties in the prewriting stage, and a further 53% have thought problems. In fact, according to a separate tally, over 90% of native speakers have either prewriting or thought problems.

These figures should explode the currently held myth concerning the writing problems of university students or, at least, of students attending the Carleton University Writing Tutorial Service. For members of the community outside of the University, if not for those within, the impression is

Table 1

Writing Problems Encountered by Carleton University Native Speakers Attending the Writing Tutorial Service

Problem	Percentage of Students
Prewriting problems: how to analyse assignment, approach topic, explore subject, do research	64.9
Problems in organization: faulty logic; poor development of ideas; lack of coherence, etc.	53.4
Problems with format and conventions, including footnote and bibliographic form, etc.	23
Frequent major problems in grammar: lack of subject-verb agreement; errors in pronoun case, reference and agreement; major faults in sentence structure (comma-splice, run-on, etc.)	12.2
Occasional major problems in grammar	22.3
Frequent minor problems in grammar, usage, sentence structure and mechanics: dangling modifiers, faulty parallelism, errors in punctuation, etc.	20.9
Occasional minor problems in grammar	35.1
Frequent problems in diction: imprecise use and misuse of words, inappropriate levels of language, etc.	19.6
Occasional problems in diction	24.3
Frequent stylistic problems: awkwardness, wordiness, lack of clarity and precision, etc.	33.1
Occasional stylistic problems	35.1

that such services as the WTS are intended for students with so-called "remedial" problems. By that is meant problems with grammar such as lack of subject-verb agreement, errors in pronoun case and major faults in sentence structure, with the consequent mistakes in punctuation. And the general assumption is that these problems should have been dealt with earlier and that we are therefore compensating for the deficiencies of the school system.

The nature of the writing problems revealed by our statistics, however, is very different. As we have seen, relatively few students have persistent difficulties with grammar. In many cases, students, whose writing does display such weaknesses, have more serious prethinking and organizational problems as well. Often, once the thinking problems are worked out, the grammatical problems, especially those relating to sentence structure, are resolved as well. Admittedly, these problems do not always disappear so easily; they often have to be dealt with separately. However, this teaching is only a small part of our work at the Service.

The majority of the students coming to the Writing Tutorial Service come for help with problems that we characterize loosely as prethinking and thought problems—all the problems relating to the analysis of the assignment, the delimitation of the topic, the determination of the appropriate research strategies, and the attempt to find significance and focus in the data amassed; in a word, problems that cannot be solved by reciting a rule and doing a set of exercises.

These problems relate very intimately to the nature of the material studied, the kind of thinking required in the discipline, and the degree of abstraction required of the student at his level of study. Given, then, that writing problems are tied so closely to the complexity of the intellectual material the writer is required to confront, an explanation for the number of students seeking our help emerges that is different from the popular notion that present day students are underpre-

pared and unqualified for university. Perhaps the reason is simply that the material they must confront in college is more challenging than their high school work. And, as Lloyd-Jones points out, "as one's intellectual reach is extended, one's once adequate writing is no longer sufficient ... To some extent, confusing prose is a sign of active engagement with new ideas" (1977:220). Because universities present "new ideas," students experience difficulties reworking their "old skills with language ... to fit the new circumstances." In other words, these writing problems are inevitable as long as universities continue to challenge the minds of their students beyond the level of their achievement at secondary school.

H. A. Gleason, Jr. takes this argument one step further. In discussing the writing abilities of his students at the University of Toronto over the last ten years, he argues that "students are ... writing about as well as they used to" (1978:25). However, what have changed are the demands made of them. "For quality university work in the seventies, standards higher than those of the fifties or the thirties are essential." His point is the following one:

> There has been a continuing change in university curricula so gradual as to have been largely unnoticed. The trend has been away from mere learning of fact to understanding of principles, and the concepts presented have tended towards increasing abstractness and elegance. I pick up from time to time first-year textbooks in science subjects that I taught thirty years ago but have not followed closely over the intervening years. Always I am struck to see how profound the changes are. I mean that literally—the changes are overwhelmingly toward more profound treatments. By and large, in his central substantive courses, today's university student is wrestling with more difficult material to comprehend and to state than was yesterday's. (Gleason 1978:25)

Philosophy

The philosophy and teaching strategies of the Writing Tutorial Service have been determined empirically on the basis of the nature of the writing problems encountered by the students enrolled. Our approach to the teaching of writing is based on the following assumptions. First, writing is learning. University teachers give students writing assignments not so

that they will thereby display their mastery of the material but rather so that they will, by the very act of writing, master that material. Further, to write within a discipline is to internalize the thinking strategies and the modes of analysis of that discipline.

Second, given that writing is intimately connected with learning and with thinking, the problems students encounter in writing may be indices of the complexity of the subject-matter they are encountering rather than symptoms of their inadequate training or personal deficiencies. Our attitudes towards, and expectations of, the students attending the Service are defined by this awareness.

Third, the teaching of writing includes far more than the teaching of editorial skills or correctness. To teach writing, one must teach the whole process of composing from the earliest stages of prewriting up to and including the final copy-editing. One of the failings of traditional composition teaching has been its focus on only the last stages of the writing process. There is a historical reason for this truncation (see Corbett, 1965); however, without going into a history of the teaching of writing, I would like to point out that recent theories of the teaching of composition have involved a return to the classical view of rhetoric, a much broader conception that entailed a study not only of stylistic elaboration and variation but also an analysis of prewriting or "inventio," an attempt to define a procedure for discovering what one has to say about a subject. It is this broader conception of rhetoric that underlies our approach.

Fourth, in our teaching, in fact, we focus primarily on the earliest stages of composing—the prewriting, believing that the quality of the initial work, although invisible, defines the quality of the completed piece of writing; or, at least, that a good beginning is a necessary if not a sufficient condition of effective writing. This initial preparatory stage has been much neglected partly because it has been so little

understood and partly because it is not amenable to teaching in the traditional classroom. Recently, there has been some fruitful research directed towards an understanding of the creative process, in general, and the composing process, in particular, and we try to glean what is useful from this research for incorporation into our teaching practices. (For a review of such research, see Freedman, 1981.)

Fifth, to teach students effective strategies of prewriting, we must focus on the process of writing rather than the product. In fact, a study of the product belies the process: the former is linear, complete, inevitable, effortless; the latter is recursive, open-ended, tortured. Our strategy is to interrelate with the student during his process of composition; we discuss with him the approaches he has been taking to his topic and his assignment, and we help him to discover for himself appropriate strategies for defining his assignment, engaging with his subject, amassing his material, coming to his own insights and syntheses, and defining his audience's demands. An incidental advantage to this is that we teach at the moment at which teaching is most likely to stick, when the student is most motivated to learn.

As a corollary to this focus on the process of writing, we concentrate on the student's work rather than sets of exercises. Handouts and exercises are used on a supplementary basis to reinforce certain rules, especially relating to mechanics and punctuation, but our primary focus is always on the student's own writing.

A sixth premise is that, although there may be certain common denominators, modes of writing vary according to discipline, just as modes of thinking do. Different disciplines imply different heuristic procedures for arriving at insights; they involve different organizational patterns and rhetorical strategies; and they suggest different relationships between writer and reader. To use rather simplistic examples, the first person is as taboo to scientists as the ubiquitous passive

of scientific writing is to English professors. At the Writing Tutorial Service we respect the different demands and different requirements of other disciplines; we do not try to impose English Department standards on sociology papers, nor do we label as jargon the terminology of every field but ours.

A seventh premise underlying our teaching is that one cannot write writing, one can only write about something for someone (Johnson 1962:109). It is a sensitivity to this "someone," an awareness of audience that we try to inculcate in our students. Students need to become sensitive to differing demands made by differing audiences: if your reader is a specialist in the field, a certain tone must be maintained and certain assumptions can be taken for granted; writing for an academic audience imposes certain demands; writing for a reader who is also an examiner imposes others. The concepts of correctness and appropriate usage are taught in this context of audience awareness.

Our role vis-à-vis the students, however, is not that of audience. We are their teachers, their advisers, and their allies in the tasks of writing and audience analysis. To be both audience and teacher often raises difficulties for the teacher of composition; these difficulties we do not face. Similarly, our roles as teachers are not undercut by our having to be examiners and evaluators as well.

Finally, we operate on the assumption that the Writing Tutorial Service provides as many benefits to the graduate students who tutor as to the undergraduates who are taught. The teaching forces them to clarify their own assumptions and possible misconceptions concerning writing. They frequently comment on the growth of their own writing skills as well as their increased sensitivity to the written word. In addition, during workshops and regular meetings, their teaching is placed within a theoretical context so that they may gain an understanding of both the practical and theoretical

dimensions of a discipline that tends to be neglected in most university curricula.

Teaching Strategies

Given the nature of our students' writing problems, and given too our philosophy, how do we respond to their requests for help? Broadly speaking, we respond by interacting with the students in the course of their assignments, while they are composing. This allows us to offer the kind of guidance they need at the moment it is needed. Our overall strategy is not to teach after the fact but to intervene during the process of writing, although "intervene" may be too strong a word, for our thrust is always to elicit, probe, provoke, redirect—in short, to help the student discover for himself within himself the appropriate strategies.

Our teaching strategies are dependent on the stage of the composing process at which we are required to intervene, and we have found that there are several such critical points, each implying a different approach. These can be plotted against the following model of the composing process, based on the early work of Wallas (1926), and the later refinements of Young, Becker, and Pike (1970), and Winterowd (1979). We can distinguish the following stages: starting-point; exploration; incubation; illumination; composing; reformulation; editing.[1]

The starting point is the stage at which the task is analysed and perceived as a problem to be solved; ideally the writer will experience a genuine need to write, to solve the problem set by the assignment, and will dimly perceive what Young *et al.* (1970:92) call the known unknown, the solution

[1] These stages are not necessarily meant to represent separable or discrete segments of the composing process: the illumination may, and frequently does coincide with the composing; for some individuals, the first draft is the final one, the editing and reformulating occurring internally either before or during the physical act of writing. Furthermore, the scheme is not intended to suggest a linear sequence in time.

that is being sought. The second stage, the exploration, includes all the initial, intellectual preparatory activity: amassing data; doing research; critically analysing the material amassed; dredging from one's memory relevant experiences, ideas, constructs; analysing; comparing; synthesizing; and, in general, focusing one's intellectual powers intensely on the problem to be solved. During the incubation, in contrast, the conscious mind ceases from activity so that the unconscious, subconscious, or suprarational powers may operate. Creative figures in many disciplines have attested to the necessity of this conscious withdrawl, and withdrawl of consciousness, from the task at hand to free our less understood creative forces. The illumination is the moment of insight, the "eureka," during which what was seemingly shapeless, disjointed, and without order suddenly assumes form and pattern.

The fifth stage, the composing, involves the physical act of writing the first draft, an activity that may precede or succeed the illumination, or perhaps, more typically, may itself bring about or constitute the moment of insight. The reformulation is, in part, what Wallas (1928) called the "verification," the testing of the insight in language; sentences, words, paragraphs are reworked to approximate more closely the intended meaning while the meaning itself is reshaped under the pressure of its formulation into language. The editing, as opposed to the reformulation, involves the final refinements, the concern with the superficial, technical matters of mechanics, puntuation, spelling, and "the adjustment of the 'suface' of the text so that it approximates ... Edited Standard English" (Winterowd, 1979).

Admittedly crude, this scheme is useful in our teaching, allowing us first, to locate those stages where we can successfully intervene and indicating, second, where we ought not to interfere. What is too frequently ignored is that certain phases of the composing process are not only unconscious,

but that they resent and resist the intrusion of consciousness. There are times during our writing when we must turn off; sometimes, the best advice is to go away and take a walk or a nap. On the other hand, for the unconscious creative forces to be able to operate, there must have been sufficient preceding conscious, intellectual preparation; the unconscious must be sufficiently stocked, there must be something to incubate.

Although some such sequencing is implied, this model of the composing process is not intended to be linear. On the contrary, the process is essentially recursive, the reformulation often revealing the need for more exploration, and the composing sometimes necessitating a return to the starting-point. Much of our teaching is directed towards helping students to realize and respect this recursiveness, this need not just to revise but sometimes to go back to the beginning. In this, we must fight against the bias of most composition textbooks and much composition teaching which reduce the process of writing to the simplistic: choose a subject, restrict your topic, write a thesis sentence, make an outline, then write your essay. Such a view is naive and dangerous, diminishing the creative potential of the composing process by insisting that the "meaning" precedes the writing and ascribing to the process a linearity that does not exist.

Remembering, then, that the sequence is recursive rather than linear, we can locate our teaching at four critical points in the composing process: the starting-point; the exploration; the reformulation; and, to a lesser extent, the editing.

At the starting-point, our thrust is twofold. First, we try to help students become engaged in their assignment, or, if they have a choice, find a task that is meaningful to them, one where they themselves can feel what Young (1970) calls the initial "incongruity" of the problem and the accompanying pressure to seek a resolution. Second, we must make sure that students understand the nature of the assignment, understand that what is required, for example, is a critical

analysis rather than a plot summary, a synthesis rather than a repetition of facts or generalizations. The difficulty is that the conceptual task required is sometimes beyond what students have previously undertaken, and they either do not perceive this or fumble in attempting what is just beyond their reach.

This is not to suggest that students have been inadequately prepared for the intellectual demands made in university. On the contrary. Such increasing demands are surely to be expected in the course of a normal intellectual progression. As we delve more deeply into any discipline, our intellectual powers are continually being extended. Since writing involves not only transcribing but internalizing the thinking of the discipline, the task of writing becomes commensurately more difficult with each intellectual leap forward.

Some years ago, a Biology professor approached us to organize a pilot program for his third year class in ecology. He was concerned that his students weren't writing well. These were all third or fourth year students, most in the Honours program, and they had generally performed successfully in previous Biology courses, all of which required some writing of essays as well as lab reports. In this course, however, there was a significant breakdown in their writing abilities. Some discussion revealed that the level of conceptualization demanded by the professor and the discipline differed significantly from that previously required. First, students were taken out of the lab to confront the real world, with all its untidiness. Second, they were asked to generalize on the basis of this real data, to weigh probabilities, to evaluate other scientific studies in the context of their own research, to analyse and synthesize the work of others, and to formulate an overall conceptual framework. In the face of these more complex demands, many students were not able to perform as successfully as they had with simpler tasks.

Pedagogically, what was interesting was how explicit this

professor was about the level of his expectations. In his first lecture and periodically throughout the course, he described precisely the kind of thinking required and the nature of the writing he expected. Yet the students did not hear; they filtered out what they could not assimilate.

It was not sufficient for them to be told: they had to be brought to see for themselves. What is necessary in such situations is lengthy dialoguing, patient eliciting, in which students are encouraged to discover for themselves the kind of critical activity required by their assignments. Such teaching is not easy; in the final analysis, the students cannot be taught, they can only be brought to learn. And tutoring, especially individualized tutoring in a non-threatening environment, has proved to be far more conducive to such learning than lecturing.

The second stage at which we can profitably intervene is the preparatory stage, the exploration. Most simply, we direct students to the appropriate sources for research, we show them how to gather data, amass material. But we also encourage them to think about the data they have amassed, to compare, to contrast, evaluate, analyse, synthesize. By asking probing questions, by eliciting their own critical appraisal, we encourage them to focus intensely and critically as they explore, to place what they are discovering within an overall conceptual framework.

Our most important pedagogical technique, then, is talk; primarily questions, on our part, to elicit as much talk as possible on the part of the student. We may be providing opportunities for talk to students who have not yet learned the pleasure of playing with ideas, of bringing their intellectual experience to bear on their lives. We try to help them discover how to place their ideas within the context of their intellectual lives, teaching them a skill they can later practice on their own. What we hope they will learn is the creative power of language itself. If, at times during the composing

process, language seems inert and recalcitrant in our struggle to formulate our meanings, at others, language can be immensely generative, opening new vistas, creating insights where there were none. Through talk in this exploratory stage as well as through writing, students can learn the creative power of language, something that is not realized in the lecture-hall to library stall routine of many students' lives.

The next three stages of the writing process, incubation, illumination, and composing, must come on their own if they come at all. We do not and cannot intervene; we can only assure students that if the scene has been sufficiently set in the initial stages, the insight will come.

Writing the first draft may be as little controlled by our conscious will as the incubation and illumination; however, once that draft has been formulated, we are called on to intervene again. These are many of our most painful encounters, when we must assure the student that what he has written is good, very good indeed, as a first draft, and that, to paraphrase the psychiatrist at the end of *Portnoy's Complaint*, now we can begin.

Revision is especially painful for our students, for all who write surely, and is something our students have not been trained to do. What they have not learned is that the composing itself is often a discovery procedure; for many of us, only by writing do we learn what we mean. We encourage students to use writing as a heuristic in this way; the result, however, is that students often only arrive at their moment of illumination, their perception of an overall organizing pattern, during the course of their writing, and frequently not until very late in that first draft. Unfortunately what they don't realize is that they must recompose this draft into a form acceptable in an academic essay.

In his taxonomy of discourse, James Kinneavy (1976) distinguishes various possible formal patterns of written discourse according to six aims. Among these, he differentiates

writing in which the writer's aim is to explore a problem from that in which he intends to prove a thesis; these two are radically different, each implying a different organizational pattern for the essay. This distinction is a fruitful one for our teaching. Although the student's aim, in the first draft, may be to explore the problem and discover his ideas, in the finished version, his aim must be to prove a thesis, and the organization of his essay must be correspondingly altered.

The final stage of the composing process is editing, a point at which we intervene in a more conventional manner; in many ways, this is the easiest kind of teaching. We teach footnoting, bibliographic form, the rules of punctuation. At this stage, too, we introduce some discussion of the conventions of usage, couched in terms of audience awareness.

Audience considerations are introduced from the earliest phases of the composing process. At the starting-point, the student must consider what his reader, in this case the teacher, expects in the assignment: a critical analysis, for example, rather than a plot summary, use of source material as well as original thinking, and so on. Similarly, in discussing the appropriate form of an academic essay, the argumentative mode rather than the exploratory, we are talking about reader expectations in part. However, the focus on the reader is most explicit and most cynical when we discuss the conventions of usage.

One advantage of our teaching is that we can assume this tone of cynicism without hypocrisy; we are, after all, never the intended audience, never the evaluators ourselves; we are only the writer's allies in the task of audience analysis. That the tutor does not grade the paper is a great asset to us, liberating both the tutor and the student from the subtle political tensions that contaminate the relationship between the student and his examiner. And the student's role towards his professor, his reader, is invariably, to use the Britton (1975) classification, that of pupil to examiner. That this can be

otherwise is not even conceived by most of our students, and we must operate within this framework. Our challenge is to help students realize that even within these limitations, writing an academic essay can be a creative act, an opportunity for real learning, and that the best writing comes where the writer is fully engaged and moves from a real perception of a problem to a genuine insight, refined and formulated through language.

This then is the kind of teaching that takes place in the Writing Tutorial Service. We use certain supplementary strategies, but the core of the teaching is always the one-on-one dialoguing over the student's own work.

Supplementary Teaching Strategies

Those supplementary teaching strategies which are used were introduced to help cope with the problem of increasing numbers, for the students flock to the Service. Whatever can be taught outside the tutorial structure is so taught. We have, for example, some auto-instructional material as well as some audio cassettes for teaching the conventions of punctuation and bibliographic form. Even this teaching, however, must be reinforced in the context of the student's own work, but the general principles can be learned by listening to tapes or reading handbooks, with a considerable saving of our valuable tutorial time.

In addition, we have set up little workshops on the development of style; that is what we have chosen to call these sessions because the term is imprecise and general enough to cover what we do, which is sentence-combining. Research studies keep pointing to the same conclusions, whether the studies have been undertaken with elementary school children or secondary, with college students or adults:[2] intensive and extensive practice with sentence-combining leads to greater syntactic fluency. Our workshops on sentence-combining are

[2] See, for example, Mellon (1969), O'Hare (1973), and Morenberg *et al.* (1978).

recommended for those students whose writing seems immature as well as for those whose writing is marred by those syntactic messes which are marked by marginal "awks" and which generally indicate the student is attempting a structure he is not yet comfortable with. Tutors are encouraged to resist the temptation to tell these students: simplify your style, break up your sentences into smaller units, avoid these complex structures. To recommend that the students return to safe structures they have mastered is to stifle their attempts at growth. Instead, we either encourage individual work with sentence-combining, using models of those syntactic structures the student hasn't mastered, or we encourage the student to participate in our workshop on style. Working within a group has great advantages; the students need to discuss the stylistic options available, to see each others' combinations, to hear the responses of others to the versions they have produced in order to realize for themselves the syntactic possibilities of the language.

The Tutors

The success or failure of such a program clearly rests with the teachers. Who are these tutors, then, and how are they selected? The tutors are all students pursuing graduate degrees, although not only nor even primarily in English. We choose tutors from all disciplines in the humanities—history as well as English; from the social sciences—economics, political science, sociology; and from such professional fields as social work. In our experience, English students have no better training in writing or the teaching of writing than graduates of other disciplines. Nor do we select the tutors specifically on the basis of their own writing skills, although their admission to graduate school attests to their successful performance as undergraduates.

The tutors are, in part, self-selected: an interest in working as a writing tutor counts for a great deal. In part, they are

screened during interviews where, although we discuss writing, what is evaluated is not their knowledge of that discipline (to expect any graduate student, even a former teacher, to know much about the field is unrealistic), but rather those indefinable personality characteristics that make tutorial teaching successful—warmth, ease, tact, firmness as well as those intellectual qualities that will make the tutors receptive to new learning—curiosity, openness, flexibility, tolerance.

Despite the obvious disadvantage of having to retrain a new contingent every year or two, the use of graduate students as tutors has great advantages. First, graduate students are continually engaged in the process of writing themselves—papers, seminars, reports, etc. Surely it is distance in time from the composing process that allows teachers to falsify and simplify the writing process in the manner of most composition textbooks. Graduate students have not forgotten the pain and the "chaos" of the early stages, and, if they are encouraged to look honestly at their own experience before talking glibly to others, they will not dismiss their students with facile platitudes.

A second advantage of staffing the Writing Tutorial Service with graduate students is that the tutors themselves benefit as much from the experience as the undergraduates who are taught. The teaching forces them to clarify their own assumptions and possible misconceptions concerning writing.

At the beginning of the year, the tutors participate in a three-day intensive training session: half-days are spent on the presentation of theory, half-days on pedagogic techniques, focusing on actual essays written by Carleton students in preceding years. The theory presented in the morning is translated immediately into practice each afternoon.

The training sessions have several objectives. The first is preventative: to point out the futility, the ultimate irrelevance of traditional composition teaching, with its emphasis on errors and conventions of usage, on the product

rather than the process. Our graduate students are in the happy position of having been taught little about composition in their previous schooling, so that the deprogramming is primarily a warning against turning to the conventional composition handbooks and rhetorics that proliferate in our bookstores and libraries. Second, the students are given sufficient introduction to creativity theory and recent research findings about the composing process to locate their teaching, to identify the strategic points for intervention, and to pin-point consequently the most effective techniques for intervention. This theoretic introduction is necessarily brief and sketchy, enough only to whet their appetites for further exploration and to provide the tutors with something of a framework within which to place their teaching. At the first meeting too, tutors are given a packet of material to study, including certain seminal articles on tutoring and writing, a bibliography of further readings in the field, and a statement outlining the underlying philosophy of the Writing Tutorial Service. Such an explicit statement is necessary for those who have not been trained to think in a disciplined way about writing and who need a context in which to operate as teachers of writing.

Throughout the year, the tutors continue to meet regularly with the Director to discuss specific pedagogic problems and teaching techniques. The theory introduced in the training session is re-examined in the light of their experiences teaching; the discussions that ensue are typically lively, incisive, and focused, indicative of the emotional, intellectual, and professional commitment of these graduate students to their task. At the end of the year when asked to assess the value of their experience, the tutors have been unanimous in insisting on the personal satisfaction as well as the intellectual growth afforded them by their work.

And what of the value of the program to the students? We have as yet developed no formal procedures for measuring "results." Some instructors have informally compared the writing of students who visited the Service regularly with those who did not and have found a significant improvement in the writing skills of the former. Generally, in fact, faculty response has been enthusiastic and encouraging. What is more significant however, given that attendance is entirely voluntary, is the number of students who visit the Service and the number of times they return. We have increased the number of tutors and still our tutoring schedule is fully booked—weeks in advance. Since the program offers no extrinsic rewards, no university "credit," presumably the students must recognize some intrinsic value in their sessions at the Writing Tutorial Service. By coming voluntarily, by coming in such numbers, and by returning repeatedly, these students are the most convincing proof of the success of the program.

By their continued participation in the Writing Tutorial Service, our students also reveal, first, the intensity of their commitment to developing their writing skills and, second, given the emphasis of our program, their awareness that writing entails far more than the superficial qualities highlighted in the public outcry about literacy. Along with the professors who keep assigning writing, the students enrolled in our program implicitly recognize that writing is, as Janet Emig (1977) insists, a mode of learning and, in fact, a mode of knowing that is central to the academic enterprise. And perhaps the public outcry over literacy, however simplistic, inadequate, and clumsy its expression, may itself imply the same underlying recognition of the centrality of writing not just as a means of communicating but as a means of knowing and growing—a recognition along with Richard Lloyd-Jones that

"all human beings always need to write better, for in language a person discovers humanity, and in written language the essential human being is captured in a frozen moment for examination" (1977:218–19).

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